

**WELFARE PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK  
OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS  
IN TANF FAMILIES WORKSHOP**

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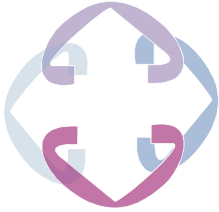
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This report describes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Administration for Family, Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network workshop, *Addressing the Needs of Noncustodial Parents in TANF Families*. The workshop was held in Chicago, Illinois on July 23 and 24, 2001.



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The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Network is a federally funded initiative through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance. The objective of the Welfare Peer TA Network is to facilitate the sharing of information between and among States and to establish linkages between organizations serving the needs of welfare recipients. The U.S. Administration for Children and Families (ACF), with support from the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, sponsored the *Addressing the Needs of Noncustodial Parents in TANF Families Workshop* on July 23 and 24 in Chicago, IL. Participants included representatives from State Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Child Support Enforcement, local fatherhood service providers, and Federal participants from the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of the workshop was to promote collaboration between State TANF and OCSE agencies, and to encourage the sharing of information about initiatives to address the needs of noncustodial parents.

**1. Background**

Nearly 12 million mothers are raising children in single parent families.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 79 percent of these mothers work either full time (47%) or part-time (32%). Despite this work effort, over 32 percent of their families are officially poor and most of the rest have incomes below 200 percent of poverty (near poor). To help make ends meet, about 38 percent of these families participate in at least one public assistance program such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Food Stamps, public housing or rental assistance, or General Assistance. Regular, timely child support payments could be of great help to these families and reduce their need for public assistance. However, too few low and moderate-income custodial

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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, Child Support for Custodial Mothers and Fathers, P60-212. October 2000. Available: <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/custody.html>. Accessed: June 27, 2001. Cited in Roberts, Paula AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION AND A POUND OF CURE: *Developing State Policy On The Payment of Child Support Arrears By Low Income Parents*.

mothers receive such support payments: 81 percent of poor children and 60 percent of near poor children with a non-custodial parent receive *no* child support.<sup>2</sup>

In 1999, almost a quarter (23 percent) of children lived with only their mothers, four percent lived with only their fathers, and four percent lived with neither of their parents.<sup>3,4</sup>

Approximately 38 percent of children living in single-mother headed households receive TANF benefits. “The median income available to children in two-parent families is two and one half times greater than the median income of children in one-parent families.”<sup>5</sup> Both financial and emotional support from fathers is essential for healthy child development. Research conducted by the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Fatherhood Initiative shows:

- Father involvement is important even for very young children. Good fathering during infancy and early childhood contributes to the development of emotional security, curiosity, and math and verbal skills.
- Higher levels of involvement by fathers in activities with their children, such as eating meals together, going on outings, and helping with homework, are associated with fewer behavioral problems, higher levels of sociability, and higher levels of school performance among children and adolescents.
- Involvement by fathers in children’s schooling, such as volunteering at school and attending school meetings, parent-teacher conferences and class events, is associated with higher grades, greater school enjoyment, and lower chances of suspension or expulsion from school.

The father-child relationship affects daughters as well as sons. Girls who live with both their mother and their father do better academically. In addition, they are less likely to engage in early sexual involvement and in the use of alcohol or drugs.

The fourth TANF objective, “to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families,” affords States an opportunity to develop programs to address the needs of noncustodial parents and their children. TANF funding guidelines include time limits only for “assistance” services. Assistance, as defined in the final TANF regulation (§260.31), includes those benefits directed at “basic ongoing needs (food, clothing, shelter, utilities, household goods, etc.). Such

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<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau, Child Support for Custodial Mothers and Fathers, P60-212. October 2000. Available: <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/custody.html>. Accessed: June 27, 2001. Cited in Roberts, Paula AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION AND A POUND OF CURE: *Developing State Policy On The Payment of Child Support Arrears By Low Income Parents*

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau, March Current Population Survey

<sup>4</sup> It is for this reason that the term “noncustodial parent” typically refers to father who does not share primary caregiver responsibilities.

<sup>5</sup> Gallagher, M. and Zedlewski, S. (1999). *Income and Hardship: Poverty Among Children: Snapshots of America’s Families*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

potentially useful programs for noncustodial parents as child care and transportation for working fathers, short term emergency services (not to exceed four months), education, training, and supportive services that do not provide income support (e.g. counseling, peer networks, information and referral, transitional services), then, are not “assistance” and therefore not subject to time limits, work requirements, or data reporting.

These risk factors can be reduced if children have strong family bonds. In particular, research suggests that children benefit from positive relationships not only with their mothers, but also with their fathers, even if they do not share the same residence.<sup>6</sup>

Social programs in the past have focused on the provision of services to poor children in families headed by single mothers, neglecting the needs of these children’s fathers. Recent studies suggest that poor children tend to have low-income fathers who face substantial barriers to employment, and that their limited access to services may prevent them from financial and emotional involvement with their children. In view of these findings, welfare reform goals to increase compliance with child support payment is unlikely to take place unless Federal and State agencies provide low-income fathers with programs that increase their employability and parental skills. In recent years, programs that address the needs of noncustodial parents have gained in importance, as practitioners and researches have become aware of the barriers to responsible fatherhood. As fathers are able to meet their child support payments, they are also more likely to become emotionally connected to their children, thus reducing the risks of negative outcomes among our youngest generations. In addition, increasing the payments of noncustodial parents to their families is likely to alleviating child poverty.

Central to effective programs addressing the complex needs of noncustodial parents is the collaboration of agencies. In particular, this workshop seeks to bring together and encourage partnership between TANF and OCSE State agencies. TANF presents States with substantial flexibility in the design of programs. The movement of families from welfare to sustainable employment that provides earnings consistent with self-sufficiency is a key concept of TANF. The dramatic drop in the TANF caseloads, now estimated at about one-half of the families in welfare in 1996, left States with large funds for service programs. Given TANF funding flexibility, States could use some of these funds for fatherhood initiatives.

There is need to expand and even modify the way in which we look at programs. The Federal OCSE and TANF are supportive of efforts to address the needs of noncustodial parents. Some

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<sup>6</sup> Reichert, Dana. 2000. “Connecting Low-Income Fathers and Families: A Guide to Practical Policies.” National Conference of State Legislatures. Washington, DC: NCSL.

States are already looking at ways to increase the flexibility of the regulations to enforce child support payments, such as partial forgiveness of arrearages to increase compliance.

Following a series of welcoming remarks, which included the identification as Child Support and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as the most important support welfare leavers have, the first session was devoted to States sharing their own successful strategies and ongoing, innovative fatherhood programs. Joseph Mason, Community Outreach, Illinois Department of Public Aid, Department of Child Support Enforcement, launched the discussion of innovative approaches to addressing the needs of noncustodial parents, highlighting the Illinois experience.

## **2. Serving Noncustodial Parents**

Currently, the formal child-support system has many punitive measures that penalize noncustodial fathers.<sup>7</sup> First, awards are set according to State child support guidelines, which tend to ignore the income level of fathers, resulting in low-income fathers paying a larger share of their income toward child support than higher-income fathers. Second, if the father fails to show up in court, his earnings are imputed as full-time minimum wage, which is usually higher than the actual earnings of many low-income fathers. Third, default and retroactive orders (sometimes going back to the birth of the child even if the custodial parents filed for paternity years later) contribute to the accumulation of arrearages among low-income fathers, which usually limit substantially their ability to meet child support payments. Fourth, any amount accrued cannot be forgiven by the court, even if the amount far exceeds the father's ability to pay. Fifth, courts do not take into account any informal contributions to the child's expenses when setting the retroactive award. Sixth, welfare reform gave States the authority to revoke the driver's license of noncustodial parents who do not meet their child support payments, further reducing the employment opportunities available to them. As a result, many poor fathers are unable to pay formal child support and establish a relationship with their children.

There are alternative ways to address the issues brought about by non-compliance of non-residential parents. Some of the provisions of welfare reform (1996) and the Balanced Budget Act (1997) allow States to use their welfare block grants to pay for services to unemployed noncustodial parents with children receiving TANF. In addition, welfare reform provides States with access and visitation block grants to strengthen noncustodial fathers' access to their children, and some of the child support enforcement dollars may be used to provide services to low-income noncustodial fathers. Several States have developed programs to provide fathers with a better chance of meeting their financial and emotional responsibilities to their children.

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<sup>7</sup> Sorensen, Elaine. 1999. "Obligating Dads: Helping Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers Do More for Their Children" Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

## **2.1 Effective Approaches to Addressing the Needs of Noncustodial Parents**

The programs and services available to noncustodial parents vary across States. Workshop participants took and opportunity to share information about successful programs in their home States. Joseph Mason of the Illinois Department of Public Aid established the presentation model by speaking about programs available in Illinois. Following Mr. Mason, delegates from each State highlighted their own programs serving noncustodial parents.

*Joseph Mason, Community Outreach, IDPA/DCSE  
State TANF and OCSE Delegates*

***Joseph Mason, Community Outreach, IDPA/DCSE***

### **ILLINOIS**

Noncustodial parents should be provided with the same services as custodial parents. Although there are Federal and State laws that mandate the provision of paternity services to noncustodial as well as custodial parents, sometimes these are not delivered.

Among the practices that have proven effective in attracting and retaining noncustodial parents in programs to enhance their employability and parenting skills, providing a friendly noncustodial parent-child support system, including customer service, has been crucial. In addition, it is important to bring the family together in conversations about the well-being of the child(ren) involved so that both parents are working in the same direction and with a common understanding.

Training staff in these programs is a good investment because the likelihood of success is enhanced when Child Support employees understand how programs work.

Another practice that has improved the success of programs involves the collaboration/referrals with outside entities such as community- and faith-based agencies, employment agencies, courts and educational institutions. For example, in Illinois, some of the fathers' programs work directly with the courts. When the judges know about programs, they can refer noncustodial parents to them. Also, working with the educational system has proven effective for some programs that aim to expand employment opportunities for their clients by encouraging them to obtain their GED, providing counseling, and offering occupational training.

Finally, public awareness campaigns at the national and State level are necessary to spread the word and obtain needed support. Legislative and policy makers should be engaged in the



programs. Things change daily. It is important to keep informed about how States deal with their particular issues. The following are some of the ongoing programs in Illinois. Please use the contact information to find out more about the programs that are of interest to you.

### *Noncustodial Parent Services Unit*

The Illinois Department of Public Aid operates this program within the Division of Child Support Enforcement to address issues facing noncustodial parents.

- Noncustodial parents who tell a judge that they cannot pay child support due to unemployment are referred to the Noncustodial Parent Services Unit to prepare them for employment. Parents who participate in the Department's administrative process for paternity establishment can also be referred to the Unit.
- Parents receive employment-related services, such as Earnfare and the court-monitored Job Search program plus referrals to community organizations for supportive services. Parents receive individual assessments to determine assignments for appropriate services.

Earnfare is a 6-month training program for persons with little or no work record. Jobs are based on individual skill level, interests and location. This program is only for noncustodial parents who have children receiving TANF or individuals receiving food stamps who volunteer for the program. Employers are encouraged to provide permanent employment for participants.

The main benefit of this program is that the noncustodial parent assumes financial responsibility for his child and provides for the child's emotional well-being. The self-sufficiency realized through employment and the revitalized parent's role strengthen the entire family. When participants find permanent employment, their income withholding orders are entered and child support payments are deducted from their checks.

### *Access and Visitation Programs*

In September 1997, under the umbrella of the Federal Administration of Children and Families, Section 391 of the PRWORA, the Illinois Department of Public Aid, Division of Child Support Enforcement received an Access and Visitation grant allotment of \$449,673.

- This program enables the State to establish and administer programs to support and facilitate noncustodial parents' access to and visitation of their children. Services include mediation (both voluntary and mandatory), counseling, education, development of parenting plans, visitation enforcement (including monitoring, supervision of neutral drop-off and pickup), and development of guidelines for visitation and alternative custody arrangements.
- The Illinois Department of Public Aid contracted with the "Family In Focus" program in Cook County and the "Parents and Kids Partnership" program ("PAK") in DuPage County to provide these services. Illinois has continued to expand these programs to include more

noncustodial parents who never married, since they usually are underserved in terms of access and visitation services.

- The Department of Public Aid contracted with community-based organizations to provide more enhanced services than the courts' mediation services are able to supply. These contracts enable them to hire and/or maintain additional staff, expand existing services, produce educational materials as well as provide additional services to individuals in order to enhance noncustodial parents access to their children.
- The "Family In Focus" program provides an array of services for noncustodial parents. Individuals court-ordered to participate in the program receive mediation for visitation and custody disputes, help for parents in developing parenting plans, interviews of children that are at issue to screen for potential problems, assistance with domestic violence interventions and conciliation and reconciliation counseling. The DuPage County "PAK" program includes supervised after-school activities in community and school-based resource centers. "Caring, Coping and Children" is an educational program mandated for all divorcing parents with minor children in DuPage County. Other programs include outpatient and intensive outpatient substance abuse/dependency programs, domestic violence interventions, and comprehensive family assessment services. These programs provide a holistic approach to the child support process by encouraging greater parental responsibility and parental involvement with their children.

For more information about the Access and Visitation Program, call the Noncustodial Parent Services Unit, 312-793-7987. The TTY number is 800-526-5812.

#### *Paternity Establishment Prisons Program*

In November 1996, the Illinois Department of Public Aid, Division of Child Support Enforcement, and the Illinois Department of Corrections began a six-month pilot in six sites to help incarcerated fathers establish paternity for their children who are involved in Child Support cases. In February 1997, the program grew to 23 correctional centers. Currently, this program offers imprisoned fathers at 24 State prisons the opportunity to acknowledge paternity.

Acknowledging paternity helps create a relationship between father and child and may enhance the child's future emotional and financial well being.

Child Support staff conducts computer matches of child support cases and a monthly listing of State inmates provided by Corrections. When matches are found, Child Support informs inmates that they have been named as alleged father of a child and that a Child Support Paternity Establishment Liaison will visit the prison to conduct interviews regarding paternity. If an inmate agrees he is the father, he may sign a Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity form. After the form is signed by both parents and witnessed, the inmate becomes the child's legal father, and his name is added to the child's birth certificate. An inmate may also request genetic (DNA) testing, and must agree to be bound by the results of the test. If an inmate believes he is

not the father, he may contest the claim of paternity and have a hearing at the prison before a Child Support Administrative Law Judge.

Child Support staff also interviews men at work release centers to establish support orders and begin income withholdings. Child Support and Corrections have been working to expand the program to include establishing child support orders and income withholding for prison inmates not yet in work releases. Also, the agencies have been studying a paternity program that enlists support of inmates at Illinois' three women's prisons.

### *Partners for Fragile Families Project*

Some States recently applied for waivers to ACF to provide services to low-income fathers as part of the Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration. This project was initiated by the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership, and seeks to develop a partnership between community-based organizations and Federal and State child support agencies. Illinois is one of the States that was selected for this demonstration. Their program will focus on individuals 16 to 20 years of age, and will teach them parenting skills as well as how to negotiate the child support system. An important goal of the program is to encourage the formation of two-parent families. All the programs are administered within the confines of the Child Support programs.

Programs that seek to address the needs of noncustodial fathers are more successful in bargaining modifications, arrearage reductions and payment plans when they are able to establish collaborative relationships with State child support agencies and the courts<sup>8</sup>. As shown above, Illinois is among a handful of States that have focused on building strong partnerships between community and State institutions. For example, Illinois developed a Division of Community Outreach in the Office of Child Support to provide liaison services between community organizations and agencies, and to educate programs working with fathers about child support procedures. One of the biggest challenges, according to Joseph Mason, is developing trust between local providers and child support agencies.

### *State TANF and OCSE Delegates*

With the comments of Joseph Mason as a model to guide discussion, the delegates from each State described current initiatives for noncustodial parents.

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<sup>8</sup> Reichert, Dana. 2000. "Connecting Low-Income Fathers and Families: A Guide to Practical Policies." National Conference of State Legislatures. Washington, DC: NCSL.

## **INDIANA**

Indiana sponsors the “Faces of Fatherhood Conference” to bring together grantees, fathers, and families and funding streams from TANF, Access and Visitation, and IMPACT. Indiana also has a Fragile Families Waiver. The Judicial Center, supported by an Access and Visitation Grant, Indiana has developed guidelines for visitation at different stages of a child’s life. This has provided a forum and an opportunity to discuss issues of child support with a judge.

Indiana’s Child Support Seminar series most recently focused on child support and fatherhood. The event drew members of the legal community by offering continuing education credits for conference attendance. Grantees, community-based organizations, citizens, and parents all came together at the conference aimed at establishing data matching, information and referral.

For noncustodial parents with child support arrearages, Indiana collects the currently owed support first and then collects arrearages as income rises.

## **MICHIGAN**

The Detroit Lions Single Fathers Campaign, a series of public service announcements, calendars, etc., has been in place for at least five years in Michigan. The State TANF offices collaborate extensively with Head Start in an attempt to reach both rural and urban parts of the state and to encourage NCPs to continue education and work training. Sixty-seven Friends of the Court operate in the Michigan county-based court system.

Michigan has set a benchmark of 100 percent paternity acknowledgement in three hospitals. These programs are offered at no cost to the parent. Michigan is not currently able to forgive arrearages, and confinement costs are set at the onset of the support proceedings.

A cooperative effort with prisons and county jails in Michigan is aimed at ameliorating the concerns of custodial parents who do not want the incarcerated noncustodial parent involved in the child’s life. This program utilizes the Friends of the Court system for assistance. The Friends of the Court also cooperate with the State Workforce and Career Development boards to provide employment training to those noncustodial parents facing arrearages. This has been a “tough sell,” especially with the reduction in TANF caseloads yielding a mismatch in program eligibility.

## **OHIO**

Over 88 counties in Ohio have established PRC programs. Recent State expansion focused on noncustodial parents, and three-quarters of the counties took part, mostly for the development of job skills. The current biennial budget in Ohio calls for \$10 million for local level fatherhood initiatives.

Thirteen Ohio counties are involved in access and visitation programs which provide parenting classes. There was a large constituent demand for the establishment of neutral drop-off locations. Fathers do not yet feel comfortable with the system, or feel that it works for them. Further, fathers need re-education in how to interact with their children. Many believe they can't be good fathers without money to buy expensive items or activities. Ohio is learning that men often relate better to other men and are responding with a more male-friendly environment. In response to these points, Joseph Mason of Illinois shared a poster entitled *31 Things to Do with Your Kids for Free* with the delegates.

## **WISCONSIN**

W-2, the Wisconsin TANF program, was developed with noncustodial parents in mind. The programs aimed at this population are funded with TANF dollars but function more like WtW programs and focus on putting the children first. The system has incentives for noncustodial parents who pay three consecutive months of child support on time and in full.

In Wisconsin, local agencies can grant extensions on child support arrears. An "Alternative Payment Plan" allows for the forgiveness of *interest* equal to the amount of the payment. Wisconsin has learned that noncustodial parents are much more likely to pay child support when they are convinced the money goes to the child. Therefore, they have established a 100 percent pass through *and* a 100 percent disregard for child support payments.

## **MINNESOTA**

Minnesota lacks a comprehensive strategy for linking child support enforcement and TANF. TANF and OCSE are not able to share information, which can stifle attempts at collaboration. One thing they have learned, however, is that to change the culture of child support for the future, they have to meet people where they are. Therefore, Minnesota targets outreach at young people to encourage them to be responsible. Health and human agencies run radio and television advertisements as well as offering peer counseling and encouraging staff attendance at community events.

Minnesota no longer uses the term "visitation" which implies less involvement in the child's life. Rather, the period of time spent with the child is known as "parenting time." Another change in

Minnesota's lexicon has been to abolish the concepts of "custodial" and "noncustodial parent." Now, these individuals are known as the "parent" and the "other parent." Both of these changes are attempts to shift an ingrained mindset to the idea of two parents, both of whom are essential to healthy childhood development.

Minnesota uses a \$120,000 grant to support a pregnancy prevention program called "Dad's Make a Difference." This program targets middle-school youth and is taught by high-school students. The program receives support from Federal OCS.

## **2.2 Access and Visitation Programs**

Two of Illinois' Access and Visitation Programs, Cook and DuPage Counties, sent two representatives to the meeting to discuss their programs.

### ***Family in Focus Program, Cook County***

*Lois Cornils and Rachel Seidman, Senior Court Facilitators*

The Cook County Family in Focus Program has been in operation since May, 1999. It deals primarily with cases of divorce and expedited child support for those couples never married. The staff is able to provide on-site support services in the courtroom and, when all parties are able to reach an agreement, administrative staff can enter an order on the same day. The staff is available to help parents in negotiating the system, they do not represent either parent. The goal of the program is to minimize the stress and time involved in numerous court appearances. Unlike mediation, the staff is always available to the parents. Screening, for such issues as domestic violence, is used.

The Family in Focus Program is useful even when parents are unable to arrive at a full agreement in their first session. The staff can enter either a full agreement, or a partial or temporary agreement, and/or refer clients to other court services such as mediation and parent education.

### ***Parents and Kids Partnership, DuPage County***

*Sheila Murphy-Russell, Program Manager*

Unlike Cook County, the DuPage program is very small; the Parents and Kids Partnership (PAK) works with only a single judge. Child support is established first, before any other services are offered. Clients are required to keep a "job diary" in which they record their search for work. They must seek out two jobs a day, five days a week. These clients are also ordered into an education seminar. Typically, supervised visitation of about six weeks is enough time for both

parents to become comfortable with the situation and begin progressing toward more independent visitation.

If there are no attorneys involved in the process, the judge will approve the results of the mediation that same day. Parents have access to Safe Harbor, a court house day care, during the process. Funding to support the neutral exchange program comes from the civic filing fee. A population seriously lacking in available services is the indigent divorcing population. Another grossly under-served population is children aged 13-18 years living in TANF families. The PAK Partnership is targeting prevention education at this population, particularly young men. A collaborative effort with the IDPA to serve non-court ordered clients is being planned.

### **2.3 Targeting Noncustodial Parents: Making Programs and Policies Work**

*Wayne Salter, Lead Training Consultant, Wisconsin Resource Center on Fragile Families*

According to Mr. Salter, fatherhood is moving in two directions. First, it is being celebrated as more fathers get involved in their children's lives. This is evidenced by research and media attention on the important role of fathers in the lives of their children. Organizations such as the National Center on Fathers and Families and the Fatherhood Project continually heighten public awareness about fatherhood. Meanwhile, the federal government supports family formation under the goals of TANF recognizes the importance of fatherhood with the US DHHS National Fatherhood Initiative.

Concurrently, however, the number of fathers not living with their children continues to rise, as does the number with no contact with, and/or not providing for, their children. In 1960, fewer than 10 million children were living apart from their fathers. By 1999, 70 percent of poor children were living in single parent homes, sixty-eight percent of which were headed by single women. The rise in absent fathers is very severe in the African American population where a single woman headed over eighty percent of all poor families in 1999. Today, 25 million children live apart from their fathers. Of these, sixty percent will live a significant portion of their lives without contact with their dads, and a full third will not see their father in the course of one year.

Attempts to reduce the number of absent fathers have focused on preventing pregnancy. However, prevention efforts focused only on teens fail to address the needs of young women moving into the workforce under TANF but earning incomes too low to support a family. The resultant flow into poverty and non-marital birth rates are high. Exacerbating these issues is the concept of cultural gravitation. The concept of cultural gravitation posits that people are drawn to

other people with whom they feel as sense of shared identity. Specifically, fatherhood research shows that this concept relates to female, Hispanic high school students who dropout due to pregnancy. Research indicates that as these women drop out, Hispanic men become 52 percent more likely to drop out as well.

In order to effectively reach this and other low-income populations, efforts at male transition from boyhood to adulthood and then to fatherhood are necessary to address these issues. Elaine Sorensen of the Urban Institute has found that one-third of African American males aged 20-24 years are absent fathers. Of those, about two-thirds are unemployed.

This statistic is incongruous with the fact that young fathers have high levels of initial involvement with their children. Many are present at the birth of the child and remain involved for a period of time. However, these new families are fragile.<sup>9</sup> The men do not understand responsibility. They often had virtually no relationship with the mother prior to birth and a relationship either doesn't form or it erodes. These men have been taught that if they can't contribute to their child financially, it is better to leave the mother and child alone; that they are not a father. This spiraling loss of self-esteem feeds on itself and keeps the father away long-term. This attitude may be a byproduct of the old AFDC system and its policies regarding men in the residence.

These young fathers also need to understand that child support is inevitable. People have talked to them about jobs, access to their children, consistency, respect and how to communicate, but no one talked to them about financial responsibility. When this conversations does occur, men feel they are being labeled as "sperm donors and pocketbooks." "The dilemma facing these young parents is not their problem, it is our children's problem."

Young fathers are often swept up in the legend of child support enforcement as a great beast. This can be overcome by asking fathers what they want for their children. Kids are the motivation for the fathers to seek out OCSE and find common ground.

Public-private partnerships are useful tools for serving noncustodial parents along with peer support and mentoring. Partnerships with workforce development boards can facilitate putting fathers back to work to allow them to effectively support their children. Parents *are* responsible for their children. Policy does not have to make them responsible, it has to support them in

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<sup>9</sup> The Ford Foundation describes these fathers by saying, "Fathers in fragile families, like mothers who are long-term welfare recipients, tend to be young, with little education and few skills. Some are not involved with their children because of substance abuse, conflicts with the child's mother or discouragement from his or her family. Others lack visitation rights or have had poor role models for parenting..."



acting on that responsibility. One population for whom policy is serving as a barrier to involvement with their children is the federally incarcerated. A great many federal prisoners are being sentenced to prisons located at extreme distances from their families (e.g. a group of Alaska prisoners currently serving sentences in Arizona).

### **3. Recent Experiences with the Kairos Horizon Residential Initiative**

*Mickey Griffin, Kairos Horizon Communities Corp.*

The Kairos Horizon pilot project at Tomoka C.I. in Volusia County, Florida, is the first of many “faith-based” residential programs that can help transform American prisons. The pilot program is a collaborative effort of Kairos Prison Ministry, Florida’s Commission on Responsible Fatherhood/Ounce of Prevention Fund, The Foundation for Partnership in Correctional Excellence, the Florida Department of Corrections, and volunteers from churches in the greater central Florida area.

In prisons, community links are very few and almost all volunteers come from the faith community. There is virtually no political constituency. Therefore staffing and programs are stretched past the limit.

The Kairos Horizon program seeks to bring together corrections and the faith community to effect an inner transformation of inmates and prepare them to live with others in mutual support, trust and respect. The program lasts twelve months, and focuses on family relationships and responsibilities. Almost every inmate has family ties, and almost every inmate returns to the free world, most within three years. To prepare them for successful re-entry to society, Kairos Horizon offers programs designed for growth in emotional, social, spiritual, cognitive and cultural areas.

The Kairos Horizon Communities Corp. is a non-profit organization working with local faith communities and corrections officials. Currently, programs are operational in Program components include inside and outside coordinators, God-parents, and a curricula focused on enhancing the parenting skills of inmates, including parenting education, correspondence, and Family Days. The program starts with a 3-day event presented by local volunteers. This transformational event is broadly ecumenical and is offered to all that are accepted in the program. Participants do not have to be Christians, and no effort at conversion is involved. The program houses from 48 to 64 inmates in a separate dormitory. Kairos Horizon works with Departments of Corrections to modify existing dorm facilities to create a living and learning space where some of the programs take place. Weekly “pod” and community meetings and a

self-developed code of conduct designed within existing security regulations encourage cooperative and communal interactions.

The inside and outside coordinators, hired to oversee program delivery and develop local resources, also prepare progress reports, work with the institutional staff, and recruit and train volunteers from the local faith community to lead and facilitate programs.

Programs stress accountability and mutual respect, and lead to emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development.

- Journey—a scripture-based small group study, emphasizing listening and discussion skills
- Quest—anger management, relationship and parenting skills
- Godparents—non-structured mentoring, weekly visitation by volunteers from local churches
- Family relations—weekly letter writing to children and family members and a Family Day celebration
- Workshops—on victim offender and restitution, spiritual disciplines, decision making, parenting, etc.

Studies conducted by the Florida Department of Corrections show that inmates participating in Kairos weekends are 33 percent less likely to re-offend, compared to those not participating. Those participating in Kairos follow-up activities have a 57 percent reduction in recidivism, compared to standard statistics of similar offenders. Future plans include maintaining and growing in Florida on an inter-faith basis; they also have set up the program in Ohio (Marion C.I.). And there are plans to set up similar programs in Oklahoma, Texas, CCA & Alaska.

#### **4. Visions of Manhood, Inc.**

*Joe Thomas, Executive Director*

*Alfred Colson, Youth Counselor*

Visions of Manhood, Inc., is a nonprofit organization serving the Tallahassee area since 1996. Visions works closely with the local court and school systems and has as its primary focus educating and mentoring boys and men to become responsible males and dads. Executive Director Joe Thomas and Youth Counselor Alfred Colson shared their program with the participants.

Visions began with a grant from the Capital Area Healthy Start Study in response to a determination of a dearth of programs for men. The original mission was solely to address noncompliance with child support orders, but it became clear that fathers needed other types of

supports. Now, Visions works with men on such issues as employment skills, training, timeliness, etc.. Last year, Visions had as its goal, to serve ninety men, place thirty-six on jobs, and to have at least twenty-six remain at that job for at least six months. In far exceeding these goals, Visions served 200 men, placed fifty on jobs, and retained thirty-two at the six-month mark.

TANF eligibility is not a prerequisite for receiving services and support from Visions. The Visions Youth Initiative Program is aimed at young men and administered in area schools. The idea is to take away excuses for irresponsible behaviors; and to help a boy grow into a man. In a pretest associated with the program, nearly every student indicates needing help in coping with stress. When pressed as to why they have such high levels of stress, they primarily respond that it is due to father absence. When asked what they would change if they could change one thing, a great many report that they want their fathers to be part of their lives. Visions of Manhood allows that their circumstance is sad, but refuses to accept it as an excuse. Rather, it uses this to help these young men understand how critical it is for them to be a part of their children's lives.

The Youth Initiative deals extensively with keeping these young men out of legal trouble. Many labor under the misconception that all records are expunged when they reach eighteen. However, Florida now has a 10-20-life law, which represents the sequential increases in prison time for subsequent offenses with a handgun. The program also helps students focus on anger management and conflict resolution.

In teaching students about the dangers of early sexual activity, the Youth Initiative centers on the context of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. Pregnancy prevention program staff have identified athletes as a prime target audience and long semester breaks as potential trouble spots for young people. As a result, education efforts are aimed at athletes and outreach efforts intensify over semester holidays. Program staff send out postcards reminding students of the gravity of teen pregnancy. Other aspects of the program include a field trip to Child Support Court where they hear the entire proceedings and have a chance to ask questions of the participants. They learn that their attitude will determine a lot and that the only bill you go to jail for failing to pay is child support. The program sends out a reminder about pregnancy prevention during the extended winter break from school. A three-part strategy *temptation, hesitation, participation*, helps students think about what they really want and the consequences of those actions.

## **5. TANF/OCSE Collaboration and Funding**

*Linda Lawrence, Team Administrator*

*Tom Schindler, Program Specialist*

*Gene Niewoehner, TANF Program Specialist*

*Geneva Bishop, OCSE Program Specialist*

This four-person panel of Region V staff spoke on opportunities for funding and collaboration between TANF and OCSE. Linda Lawrence, Team Administrator for Region V, announced the next round of State Improvement Grants available Fall 2001. These grants will be intended to stimulate family formation and parents' involvement in the lives of their children. Ms. Lawrence also discussed two legislative proposals with potential effects for noncustodial parents.

- Mentoring Children of Prisoners – A \$67 million budget proposal under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program, these Grants would be provided to States for partnerships with community- and faith-based groups.
- Responsible Fatherhood Initiative – Proposed at \$64 million in 2002 and \$315 million over five years, this initiative will fund projects to strengthen the role of fathers in families and support nationally significant projects aimed at expanding State and local responsible fatherhood efforts.

In discussing opportunities for collaboration between TANF and OCSE, Geneva Bishop, CSE Program Specialist for Region V, highlighted some outcomes of the 1999 Regional Conferences. These outcomes included the identification of issues and strategies such as verification of eligibility, lack of shared eligibility and referral forms, insufficient computer connectivity and technology, and confidentiality and disclosure issues. Ms. Bishop offered the following by way of operational suggestions:

**TANF should:**

- Publicize services;
- Engage staff in collaborative efforts;
- Establish agreements which outline responsibilities, and;
- Reduce sanctions for TANF clients.

**OCSE should:**

- Link CSE Web sites to WtW;
- Alert CSE to WtW services for noncustodial parents;
- Provide clients with cross-program referrals, and;
- Maximize opportunities in personal responsibility contracts.

Ms. Bishop reminded the participants of WtW policy guidance 402(a)1(A)(iv) which articulates the guidelines for information sharing between TANF and WtW.

Gene Niewoehner, TANF Program Specialist in Region V, spoke about the need for collaboration. TANF caseloads have decreased fifty-five percent, but over seventy percent of the

remaining caseload are still living in poverty. Only three percent of noncustodial parents living below the federal poverty line pay support, and only forty percent of noncustodial parents have high school diplomas.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Niewoehner identified three types of barriers to successful collaboration: policy barriers, program barriers, and practical barriers.

Policy barriers:

- Safeguarding information;
- Client confidentiality;
- Enforcement *vs.* service delivery, and;
- Emphasis on welfare cost recovery.

Program barriers:

- Based in different agencies;
- Differing philosophies;
- Mandated *vs.* voluntary clients – especially relevant to noncustodial parents.

Practical barriers:

- Family violence
- Different staff alignments and compensation;
- Judicial system flexibility;
- Clients lack job readiness, and;
- Varying concepts of family self-sufficiency.

Mr. Niewoehner encouraged participants to study the currently available research and best practices models to learn the concepts driving these successes, rather than to try to import the program as a model. Joint planning, rooted in this research, along with efforts at integration of resources and services will lead aid in reaching the goal of self-sufficiency for families.

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<sup>10</sup>Dana Reichert *Broke But Not Deadbeat: Reconnecting Low-Income Fathers and Children*

## 6. Resources

### Organizational Resources

- Center for Successful Fathering (working with fathers in community and schools)  
<http://www.fathering.org>
- Columbia University (Map & Track publication listing State-by-State initiatives)  
<http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/edu/dept/nccp>
- Families and Work Institute (Relevant publications to get dads involved)  
<http://www.familiesandwork.org>
- National Fatherhood Initiative (Establishing a City-wide Fatherhood Initiative)  
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(301) 948-0599  
<http://www.fatherhood.org>
- National Center for Fathering (research, curriculum and father assessment tool)  
<http://fathers.com>
- National Center on Fathers and Families  
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(215) 573-5500
- National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership  
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(202) 822-6725
- National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families  
Preston Garrison, Executive Director  
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(202) 737-6680

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Federal fatherhood campaign)  
<http://fatherhood.hhs.gov>

## **Written Resources**

GETTING TO WORK: HOW TANF CAN SUPPORT EX-OFFENDER PARENTS IN THE TRANSITION TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY, Legal Action Center, April, 2001. <http://www.lac.org>.

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION AND A POUND OF CURE: DEVELOPING STATE POLICY ON THE PAYMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT ARREARS BY LOW INCOME PARENTS. Paula Roberts, Center for Law and Social Policy. May 2001. <http://www.clasp.org/pubs/childrenforce/Arrearage%20Paper.PDF>

REALISTIC CHILD SUPPORT POLICIES FOR LOW INCOME FATHERS. Vicki Turetsky, Center for Law and Social Policy. March 2000. <http://www.clasp.org/pubs/childrenforce/kellogg.pdf>

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT (OCSE) INFORMATION MEMORANDUM NO. IM-00-05. US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. May 8, 2000. <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/im-00-05.htm>

HELPING FAMILIES ACHIEVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY: A GUIDE ON FUNDING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THROUGH THE TANF PROGRAM. US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/funds2.htm>.

A STATE STRATEGY FOR INCREASING CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS FROM LOW-INCOME FATHERS AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THEIR CHILDREN THROUGH ECONOMIC INCENTIVES. Wendall E. Primus and Charita L. Castro, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. April 14, 1999. <http://www.cbpp.org/4-14-99wel.htm>

OBLIGATING DADS: HELPING LOW INCOME NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS DO MORE FOR THEIR CHILDREN. Elaine Soresen, Urban Institute. March, 1999. [http://www.urban.org/family/sf\\_2.pdf](http://www.urban.org/family/sf_2.pdf)

INCARCERATED PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN. Chistopher J. Mumola, Bureau of Justice Statistics. April 2000. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/iptc.pdf>

LOW-INCOME NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS: A CHILD ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO HELPING THEM CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUPPORT OF THEIR CHILDREN. Theresa J. Feeley, National Association of Child Advocates. February 2000. <http://www.childadvocacy.org/publicat.html>

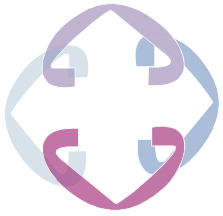
MEETING THE CHALLENGE: WHAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN DO TO SUPPORT RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD EFFORTS: A Report to The President by: The US Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor. January 2001. Available online: <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/guidance01>.

BROKE BUT NOT DEADBEAT: RECONNECTING LOW-INCOME FATHERS AND CHILDREN. Dana Reichert, National Conference of State Legislatures. July 1999. Available Online: <http://www.calib.com/peerta/pdf/broken.pdf>.

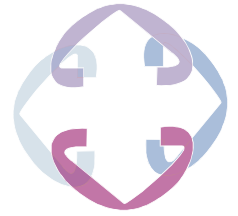
ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS IN TANF FAMILIES WORKSHOP FINAL REPORT. Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network. January 2001. Available Online: <http://www.calib.com/peerta/taevents/pdf/ncpworkshop.pdf>



## **APPENDIX A: AGENDA**



# AGENDA



## *Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network Addressing the Needs of Noncustodial Parents in TANF Families*

Chicago, IL ♦ July 24-25, 2001

### **Tuesday, July 24, 2001 (Tower Room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor)**

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.   | <b>Registration and Continental Breakfast</b>   |
| 9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.   | <b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b><br>James McCullum, ACF Midwest Regional Hub Deputy Director<br>John Horejsi, ACF Central Office<br>Linda Lawrence, ACF Region V Team Administrator<br>Nancy Woodward, IDPA/DCSE  |
| 9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.  | <b>Spotlight on States I</b><br>Participants will have the opportunity to share information about on-going innovative fatherhood programs in their States. Joseph Mason, Community Outreach, IDPA/DCSE, will launch the discussion innovative approaches to addressing the needs of noncustodial parents, highlighting the Illinois experience. |
| 10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | <b>Break</b>  |
| 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | <b>Spotlight on States II</b><br>Continued discussion of innovative fatherhood programs   |
| 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.  | <b>Review of Selected Chicago's Access and Visitation Programs<br/>Family in Focus Program, Cook County</b><br>Lois Cornils and Rachel Seidman, Senior Court Facilitators<br><br><b>Parents and Kids Partnership, DuPage County</b><br>Sheila Murphy Russell, Program Manager   |
| 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.   | <b>Keynote Lunch: Targeting Noncustodial Parents: Making Programs and Policies Work</b><br>Wayne L. Salter, Lead Training Consultant, Wisconsin Resource Center on Fragile Families   |
| 2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.   | <b>STRIVE Program in Chicago</b><br>Ernestine Brewer, Program Director, Fathers at Work Initiative, will speak about the history and mission of the Success and Training Results in Valuable Employees (STRIVE) program of the Chicago Employment Service.  |

3:00 p.m.

### **Site Visit – STRIVE**

The remainder of the afternoon will be devoted to touring the facilities and hearing from staff and clients regarding their experiences with STRIVE.

5:00 p.m.

### **Return to Federal Office Building**

## **Wednesday, July 25, 2001**

8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

### **Reflections on the Site Visit and Continental Breakfast**

Moderators:

Linda Lawrence, Team Administrator

Joseph Mason, Community Outreach, IDPA/DCSE

Participants invited to share their views regarding the site visit and what their own States are doing to address NCPs issues

8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

### **Recent Experiences with the Kairos Horizon Residential Initiative**

Moderator: John Horejsi, ACF Central Office

Presenter: Mickey Griffin, Director of Programs, Kairos Horizon and Outside Coordinator for Kairos Horizon at Tomoka Correctional Institution

9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

### **Break**

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

### **Visions of Manhood Program, Florida**

Program overview and youth prevention component

Joe Thomas, Executive Director

Alfred Colson, Youth Counselor

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### **TANF/OCS Funding Resources**

Linda Lawrence, Team Administrator

Tom Schindler, Program Specialist

### **Establishing TANF-OCSE Collaboration**

Gene Niewoehner, TANF Program Specialist

Geneva Bishop, OSCE Program Specialist

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.

### **Invited guests from the Department of Labor**

12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

### **Closing Remarks: Next Steps**

John Horejsi, ACF Central Office

Jeanette Hercik, Welfare Peer TA Network

Participants will share their plans to further their collaboration with other agencies to address needs of non-custodial parents in TANF families.

## **APPENDIX B: LIST OF SPEAKERS AND PARTICIPANTS**



**Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network**  
**Addressing the Needs of Noncustodial Parents in TANF Families**

*Federal Office Building*

*Chicago, IL*

*July 24-25, 2001*

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